

REMARKS

Claims 1-12 are now pending in the application. By this amendment, Claims 1 and 6 have been amended. The basis for these amendments can be found throughout the specification, claims, and drawings originally filed. No new matter has been added. The preceding amendments and the following remarks are believed to be fully responsive to the outstanding Office Action and are believed to place the application in condition for allowance.

The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the amendments and remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 112

Claims 1-12 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention.

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has rejected Claims 1-12, stating that the term "platelike" renders the claims unascertainable. Applicants have amended Claims 1 and 6 to call for a "plate workpiece." Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1-12 are now in a condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102

Claims 1 and 2 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Guibert (U.S. Pat. No. 4,455,478).

This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent Claim 1 calls for a drying apparatus including a drying furnace containing therein hot plates, disposed in a plurality of stages in a vertical direction, on each of which is seated a plate workpiece. See Specification at pg. 14, Paragraph [0078] and FIG. 9. Independent Claim 1 also calls for an exhaust chamber defined in a chamber casing of the furnace that includes a flow dividing plate fixed relative to the exhaust chamber and having formed therein a plurality of ventilation holes each facing a gap between the plurality of stages of hot plates. See Specification at pg. 15, Paragraphs [0079] and [0080].

In this manner, the present invention discloses a drying apparatus including a drying furnace (51) containing hot plates (52) disposed in a plurality of stages in a vertical direction, on each of which is seated a plate workpiece. See FIG. 9. The furnace includes an exhaust chamber (55) including a flow dividing plate (54) having a plurality of ventilation holes (54a) formed therein. See Specification at pg. 15, Paragraph [0079] and FIG. 9. The ventilation holes are *fixed* relative to the exhaust chamber such that the holes provide *continuous* fluid communication between the exhaust chamber and a gap formed between the plurality of stages of hot plates. See Specification at pg. 15, Paragraph [0080] and FIG. 9.

Guibert fails to teach such a relationship. Rather, Guibert teaches food-heating device including an inner tube (16) having a plurality of angularly-displaced holes (H1,

H2, H3). See Guibert at Col. 4, Ins. 34-36 and FIGS. 3 and 6. The inner tube is disposed within an outer tube (15) and is rotatable relative thereto. During a rotary cycle, the first hole registers with a first port (P1) of the outer tube such that fluid communication between the inner tube and a first compartment is established. See Guibert at Col. 4, Ins. 20-29, Col. 4, Ins. 36-44, and FIGS. 3 and 6. The respective holes (H1, H2, H3) are sequentially aligned with respective ports (P1, P2, P3) of the compartments upon further rotation of the inner tube relative to the outer tube such that fluid communication is only established between the inner tube and a *single* compartment at any given time. See Guibert at Col. 4, Ins. 42-44. In this manner, Guibert fails to teach ventilation holes that are *fixed* relative to the exhaust chamber as to do so would prevent such sequential alignment of holes. Therefore, Guibert fails to teach each and every element of the claimed invention.

Because Guibert fails to teach a drying furnace including a flow dividing plate having ventilation holes that are *fixed* relative to an exhaust chamber, Applicants respectfully submit that Guibert fails to teach each and every element of the present invention. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that independent Claim 1, as well as Claim 2, dependent therefrom, are in condition for allowance in light of the art of record. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

ALLOWABLE SUBJECT MATTER

The Examiner states that claims 3-12 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 112, 2nd paragraph, set forth in this Office action and to

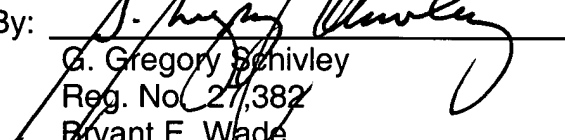
include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants have chosen not to include the limitations of Claims 1-12 into independent Claim 1 in light of the foregoing remarks.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (248) 641-1600.

Respectfully submitted,

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